

How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation

By Rosalie Maggio

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?For anyone who has ever stared at a blank page or screen?(Kaylene Weiser, organized consultant, The Wiser Way)? the revised third edition of the bestseller that offers ?a crisp, elegant way to say everything.?(Vivian Jenkins Nelson, founder, The International Institute for Interracial Interaction)

The ?exceptional, wonderful, amazing?(Vivian Jenkins Nelson, founder, The International Institute for Interracial Interaction) book that has sold nearly one million copies!

How to Say It® provides clear and practical guidance for what to say?and what not to say?in any situation. Covering everything from business correspondence to personal letters, this is the perfect desk reference for anyone who often finds themselves struggling to find those perfect words for:

? Apologies and sympathy letters
? Letters to the editor
? Cover letters
? Fundraising requests
? Social correspondence, including invitations and Announcements

This new edition features expanded advice for personal and business emails, blogs, and international communication.

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Editorial Review

About the Author
Rosalie Maggio is the award-winning author of eighteen books. She is a member of the Authors Guild and the Society for Children's Book Writers and Illustrators.

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To DAVID
Liz, Katie, Jason
Matt, Nora, Zoe

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I'm still grateful to Tom Power, the genial and gifted godfather of this book. And many thanks to Maria Gagliano, who gave it new life.

INTRODUCTION

All that is requisite to become proficient in any Art, is to know what to do and how to do it; and the Art of Letter-writing is no exception to this general rule.

—F. M. PAYNE, *Payne's Business Letter Writer and Book of Commercial Forms* (1884)

How to Say It is a practical, easy-to-use book that tells you what to say and how to say it. Its flexible approach helps you fashion compelling letters in little more time than it takes to handwrite or type them.

Although an impressive amount of business and social interaction takes place today over the telephone and fax, by e-mail, or in person, the well-written letter remains a staple of business success and one of the strongest connecting links between human beings.

Most of us are capable of writing a satisfactory letter, but few of us have the time and mental energy to deal with the countless letters that life today seems to demand of us—especially since all of them should have been written yesterday.

How to Say It features comprehensive, versatile lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs that allow you to express yourself on any subject in your own voice and style.

Thesaurus-like, these lists provide you with terms relating to your topic. Whether you want to sound formal or casual, traditional or contemporary, businesslike or lighthearted, distant or intimate, you'll find here the words for every letterwriting occasion—from powerful, cogent business letters to warm, sensitive personal letters.

An important message of this book, delivered indirectly in its pages, is that there is rarely "one right way" to write a letter. You may follow, adapt, or ignore the guidelines given here; after all, you know more about your message and your reader than any letterwriting manual. Except for someone like Napoleon, who apparently wrote more than 50,000 letters in his lifetime (and nobody ever said to him, "Get a life!"), almost everyone can use this book to write letters with increased speed, individuality, success—and enjoyment!

HOW TO USE THIS BOOK

Begin by skimming the table of contents to familiarize yourself with the fifty letter topics available to you (for example, sales letters, thank-you notes, references, apologies, acknowledgments, letters dealing with employment).

Next, flip through the appendixes so that you know what kind of help waits for you there: Appendix I deals with the mechanics of letterwriting (what kind of stationery to use, how to address an envelope, the four most common ways of setting up a letter on the page) while Appendix II deals with the content of your letter (writing tips, grammar and usage, frequently misspelled or confused words, redundant words and phrases, correct forms of address).

To find advice about the letter you want to write, either turn to the chapter that deals with that kind of letter or check the index in the back of the book. Its one thousand entries ensure that you will find the help you need.

Each chapter includes a brief introduction, a list of occasions for writing that type of letter, what to include in each letter, what not to say, comments on special situations, and what format to use.

At the heart of each chapter are the lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs you can use to construct your letter. Sample letters are also given.

The lists "prime the pump"—they start you thinking along the lines of that letter topic. They also provide those who want to compose their own letter with a number of appropriate words, or they allow those using the sample letters as guides to substitute words that fit their needs.

To compose a letter:

• Read through the "How to Say It" section, note the elements your letter should include, and personalize them to reflect your situation.

• Choose from the lists of words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs those terms that are useful to you.

• Study the sample letters to see if one can serve as a model.

• Combine your checked-off words, phrases, sentences, and paragraphs to produce a letter that says what you need it to say.

• Check your rough draft against the list of what not to say. Have you written something inappropriate? At this point, you may have a question about format or grammar or a social title. Check the index to locate the answer in one of the appendixes.

After writing your first few letters using this book, you may find that it is not, after all, so difficult or time-consuming to write your share of the billions of letters mailed each year.

ONE

ACCEPTANCES

The mind gives us thousands of ways to say no, but there's only one way to say yes, and that's from the heart.

—SUZE ORMAN

Once you decide to accept an invitation or grant a request, simply say so; this is one of the easiest letters to write.

A yes that doesn’t come from the heart results in an unenthusiastic acceptance and you may even find yourself backing out later. Writing the acceptance is not as difficult as being sure you want to say yes in the first place.

Write Acceptances for

• admissions requests: schools/clubs/organizations

• franchise applications

• invitations: dinner/meeting/party/luncheon/hospitality

• job offers

• membership offers: board/commission/organization

• proposals

• requests: contributions/favors/help

• speaking invitations: conference/workshop/banquet

• wedding invitations (see WEDDINGS)

How to Say It

• Express your pleasure in accepting the invitation/offer/proposal/bid or agreeing to do what was asked.

• Repeat the details of what you are accepting (meeting date and time, amount of the bid or of your contribution, the precise nature of your assistance, the duties you agree to assume).

• Inquire about particular needs: receipt for a tax-deductible contribution, directions to your host’s home, wheelchair accessibility, equipment for your speech, list of other organizers.

• Close with an expression of pleasure to come (seeing the person, working for the company, being part of the group) or of future action (what you want to accomplish, actions you intend to take, a reciprocal invitation).

What Not to Say

• Avoid ungracious amplifications: you are busy but you suppose you can manage it; you have two other events on the calendar that evening but you will try to stop by; you probably won't be a good speaker but, sure, you'll try. Let your yes be a simple yes. If you have reservations about your acceptance, it may be better to decline.

Tips on Writing

• Send acceptances as soon as possible. If you are late, apologize, but do not dwell on it.

• Acceptances are brief and generally deal only with the acceptance.

• Noted usage expert Rudolf Flesch says, "If your answer to an inquiry is yes, it's a good idea to make yes the first word of your letter."

• Be enthusiastic. It is entirely proper to simply state your acceptance and repeat the details of the invitation, but your stock with hosts, employers, or friends will go up if you add a sentence saying something personal, cheerful, or lively.

• When your invitation is issued in the name of more than one person, mention all of them in your reply. Mail your reply either to the person listed under the RSVP or to the first name given.

• Always respond promptly to an invitation marked "RSVP" or "Please reply." This is mandatory, obligatory, required, compulsory, imperative, and essential.

Special Situations

• When offered a position you want, write an acceptance letter that expresses your enthusiasm and pleasure and that confirms the details of your employment.

• When writing to offer a job to an applicant, include: a congratulatory remark about being chosen and something complimentary about the person's credentials, experience, or interview; information about the job—duties, salary, supervisor's name, starting date; the name and telephone number of someone who can answer questions; an expression of goodwill about the person's employment with the company. Highlight some of the advantages of working for the company to influence the person's decision to accept the offer.

• In some situations (large weddings, for example), one of a couple may accept an invitation while the other declines. In other cases (large dinner parties), check with your host to see if this is acceptable.

• White House invitations include the phone number of the Social Office where you telephone your acceptance and can ask questions about protocol, where to park your car, what to wear, how to respond to the invitation. General guidelines are: send your reply within a day of receiving the invitation; write the reply yourself (do not have a secretary do it); handwrite your reply on plain or engraved personal stationery; use the same format and person (first person or third person) to reply but insert "have the honor of accepting"; if the invitation was sent by the President's or First Lady's secretary (in the case of an informal invitation), reply to that person and write "Would you please tell/convey to . . ."

• Children can write brief acceptances for invitations: "Thank you for inviting me to your Halloween party. Wait till you see my costume!"

Format

• Model your reply on the format used in the invitation or letter. If it is handwritten, handwrite your reply. If letterhead stationery is used, reply on your letterhead. If the invitation is e-mailed, e-mail your acceptance. When the language of the invitation is informal, your reply is also informal. When replying to a formal invitation, use nearly the same words, layout, and style as the invitation:

Mr. and Mrs. Masterson Finsbury
request the pleasure of
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bloomfield's company
at a dinner-dance
on Saturday, the seventh of February
at eight o'clock
Gideon Country Club
Mr. and Mrs. Edward Bloomfield
accept with pleasure
the kind invitation of
Mr. and Mrs. Masterson Finsbury
to a dinner-dance
on Saturday, the seventh of February
at eight o'clock
Gideon Country Club

SENTENCES

After reviewing your application, we are pleased to be able to offer you the funding requested.

I accept with pleasure the position of senior research chemist.

I am happy to be able to do this.

I appreciate very much (and accept) your generous apology.

I'll be happy to meet with you in your office March 11 at 10:30 to plan this year's All-City Science Fair.

In a word, absolutely!

In response to your letter asking for support for the Foscari Children's Home, I'm enclosing a check for $500.

Thank you for inviting me to speak at the Chang-Ch'un Meditation Center next month.

We accept your kind invitation with great pleasure.

We are happy to accept your estimate for refinishing our Queen Anne dining room suite.

We are pleased to grant you the six-week extension you requested to complete your work.

We are pleased to tell you that your application for admission to the Emmet School has been approved.

We look forward to working with you.

PARAGRAPHS

I will be delighted to have dinner with you on Friday, the sixteenth of March, at seven o'clock. Thanks so much for asking me. I can hardly wait to see you and Anders again.

Thanks for telling me how much the children at St. Joseph's Home liked my storytelling the other night. I'm happy to accept your invitation to become a regular volunteer and tell stories every other Thursday evening. Do you have a CD player so that I could use music with some of the stories?

I'm looking forward to your graduation and the reception afterward. Thanks for including me.

Your bid of $6,780 to wallpaper our reception rooms has been accepted. Please read the enclosed contract and call with any questions. We were impressed with the attention to detail in your proposal and bid, and we are looking forward to our new walls.

SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Selina,

Vickers and I accept with pleasure your kind invitation to a celebration of your parents' fiftieth wedding anniversary on Saturday, July 16, at 7:30 p.m.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. Cheesewright:

Thank you for inviting me to speak at your county dental society's dinner banquet on October 26 at 7:00. I am happy to accept and will, as you suggested, discuss new patient education strategies.

I'm not sure how much time you have allotted me—will you let me know?

With best wishes,

Dear Ms. Thirkell,

I am pleased to accept your offer of the position of assistant director of the Gilbert Tebben Working Family Center.

I enjoyed the discussions with you, and I look forward to being part of this dynamic and important community resource.

The salary, hours, responsibilities, and starting date that we discussed during our last meeting are all agreeable to me. I understand that I will receive the standard benefits package, with the addition of two weeks' vacation during my first year.

Sincerely yours,
Laurence Dean

Dear Dr. Bennett,

I would be most happy to perform twenty minutes of magic tricks at the Five Towns Children's Hospital annual fair to be held on Saturday, November 8. As the date approaches, we can discuss details.

All the best,
Anna Tellwright

Dear Mr. Grandby:

We are pleased to accept for publication your self-help book, tentatively entitled *Don't Give Up*. All of us are excited about its possibilities.

Enclosed are guidelines from the production editor to help you prepare the final manuscript. Also enclosed is a preliminary draft of the book contract. Please look it over, and I will call next week to discuss it.

Sincerely yours,

Dear Ms. Unwin:

Congratulations! Your franchise application has been approved. Welcome to the Sunshine family.

Enclosed is the contract, which we suggest you discuss with your attorney, and a packet of informational materials.

Please call this office to set up an appointment to discuss any questions.

Sincerely,

Dear Violet,

Yes! I will be delighted to stay with the twins while you and Gordon take the horses to the state fair. A week is *not* too long for me. And thanks for the offer of the plane ticket—I accept with pleasure.

Love,

Dear Mr. Van Druten,

In response to your letter of February 10, we are pleased to grant you a two-month extension of the loan of the slides showing scenes of our amusement park. We appreciate being able to help you add, as you said, “a bit of amusement” to your corporate meetings.

We offer this extension with our compliments.

Cordially,
Laura Simmons

Dear Richard,

I will be happy to write you a letter of reference, and I’m delighted that you thought to ask me. You were one of my favorite students, and I’ll enjoy explaining just why to Forey, Harley and Wentworth.

Yours truly,

Mr. Clarence Rochester
accepts with pleasure
William Portlaw and Alida Ascott’s
kind invitation to dinner
on the sixteenth of June at 7:30 p.m.
but regrets that
Dr. Maggie Campion
will be absent at that time.

See also: REFUSALS, RESPONSES

TWO

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS AND CONFIRMATIONS

Life is not so short but that there is always time enough for courtesy.

—RALPH WALDO EMERSON

Letters of acknowledgment and letters of confirmation resemble each other. The letter of acknowledgment says, “I received your letter (telephone call, gift, materials).” The letter of confirmation says, “I received your letter (message, contract) and we agree about the matter”; this letter can serve as an informal contract.

Sometimes a letter of acknowledgment also serves as a thank you. Or it says you received the message or materials but will respond later, or that you passed them on to the appropriate person. Sometimes, too, acknowledgment letters are really sales letters that use the excuse of acknowledging something (an order, a payment) to present an additional sales message.

You always acknowledge expressions of condolence. You generally acknowledge anniversary or birthday greetings, congratulations, apologies, or divorce announcements.

Acknowledge or Confirm

• anniversary/birthday greetings

• apologies

• complaints

• condolences

• congratulations

• divorce announcements

• documents/reports/files/materials received

• gifts (thank-you note to follow)

• information received

• inquiries/requests (will respond as soon as possible)

• letters from constituents

• letters of introduction

• letters received (action underway, will let you know)

• mail in supervisor’s absence (assistant writes that message/letter has been received and will be dealt with later)

• manuscripts (under consideration, will give decision later)

• oral agreements, telephone discussions/agreements

• orders (see also ORDERS)

• payments

• proposals

• receipt of orders/merchandise (see also ORDERS)

• receipt of wedding gifts (see WEDDINGS)

• reports

• reservations, speaking dates, invitation times

• sympathy messages

How to Say It

• State precisely what you are acknowledging or confirming (reservation, amount, letter, order).

• Refer to the date and occasion of your last contact (telephone conversation, previous letter, in-person discussion).

• Describe what action, if any, is being taken.

• Tell when the reader will hear further from you or from someone else.

• If indicated, explain why you are not able to respond fully to the letter/ request/gift at the moment.

• Express appreciation for the previous contact, for the kindness of the person in writing you, or for the business.

• Close with a courtesy or forward-looking statement.

What Not to Say

• Don’t belabor explanations; letters of acknowledgment and confirmation are brief.

• Avoid a negative tone (“thought I’d make sure we’re both talking about the same thing”). Repeat matter-of-factly the details of the items you’re acknowledging or confirming.

Tips on Writing

• Write promptly. Acknowledgments are, by their very nature, sent immediately. One exception is acknowledging expressions of sympathy. Because of the hardships involved, responses may be sent up to six weeks later. Or, a close relative of the bereaved may write the acknowledgment: “Mother asked me to tell you how much she appreciated the loving letter of sympathy and the memorial you sent for Dad. She will be in touch with you as soon as she is able to.”

Special Situations

• When a letterwriter asks about an issue better handled by someone else, acknowledge the letter and provide the name, address, and telephone number of the appropriate person. You can also forward the letter to the proper department and so notify your correspondent.

• Timely and regular business transactions need no acknowledgment: orders are received, merchandise is delivered, payments are sent. You would, however, acknowledge receipt in unusual situations. If the previous order went astray, you will want the sender to know that this one arrived. When you receive payment from someone to whom you’ve been sending collection letters, let the person know that payment has been received (and, by implication, that there will be no more collection letters). Acknowledge large or important payments, orders, and shipments—or those from first-time customers or suppliers. Acknowledge letters, requests, orders, manuscript submissions, or complaints that cannot be responded to immediately so that the person knows that action is being taken.

• Acknowledge mail that arrives in a supervisor’s or coworker’s absence. Mention the absence without offering apologies or explanations. Do not refer to the contents of the letter; an exception is made for the

announcement of a death or serious illness. Express sympathy on behalf of the other person and say that a letter will follow as soon as possible.

• Organizations receiving memorial donations acknowledge receipt of the contribution and also notify the family so it can thank the donor personally.

• Domestic hotel and motel reservations are often made and confirmed entirely by phone. Occasionally, however, written confirmation is necessary because of special conditions or changes of plans. Include your requirements: date, length of stay, kind of accommodation, price, extras requested (crib in a room, for example), wheelchair accessibility, availability of pool, HBO, entertaining facilities. Request confirmation from foreign hotels or resorts. Include your e-mail address or fax number or, in some cases, an International Reply Coupon (IRC) for their response.

• If someone announces a divorce, avoid expressing either congratulations or sympathy (unless you know which is called for); in most cases, simply acknowledge the information.

• An apology is acknowledged to let the other person know that you have received it (and accepted it, if that is the case).

• If you cannot respond to a proposal, report, or manuscript right away, acknowledge its receipt to the sender and assure the person that you will communicate further as soon as you have evaluated it. People spend time writing reports, proposals, and manuscripts and are naturally eager for results. They will wait more patiently if their mailing has been acknowledged.

• When you cannot make an immediate decision among job applicants, acknowledge receipt of their applications or résumés or thank them for their interviews. Tell them you will let them know as soon as a decision has been made. (If you have an idea of when this will be, say so.) Thank them for their interest in your organization.

Format

• Routine acknowledgments and confirmations (receipt of applications, manuscripts, requests, payments) can be handled by e-mail, preprinted cards, or simple form letters. Note the item received and the date of receipt.

• For numerous wedding gifts or expressions of sympathy, send printed acknowledgment cards indicating that you'll respond soon. In the case of a public figure whose death inspires many messages of sympathy from people unknown to the family or deceased, printed or engraved cards or foldovers are sent (with no personal follow-up).

• Use e-mail for routine acknowledgments and confirmations. For business records, keep back-up file copies of all transactions.

• For complicated business acknowledgments or confirmations, use letterhead stationery or memo paper.

• Personal acknowledgments and confirmations are handwritten on informal personal stationery; e-mail can be used for casual situations.

WORDS

PHRASES

SENTENCES

I enjoyed speaking with you this afternoon and look forward to our meeting next Thursday at 2:30 at your office.

Just a note to let you know that the printer ribbons arrived.

Thank you for remembering my ten-year anniversary with Lamb and Company.

Thank you for the wallpaper samples, which arrived this morning.

Thank you for writing me with your views on socialized medicine.

Thank you for your order, which we received yesterday; it will be shipped to you this week.

The family of Annis Gething gratefully acknowledges your kind and comforting expressions of sympathy.

The members of the Board of Directors and I appreciated your presentation yesterday and want you to know that we are taking your concerns under serious advisement.

This is to acknowledge receipt of the rerouted shipment of Doncastle tennis rackets, catalog number AE-78573.

This is to confirm our recent conversation about the identification and removal of several underground storage tanks on my property.

This will acknowledge receipt of your report on current voter attitudes.

This will confirm our revised delivery date of November 6.

We are proceeding with the work as requested by Jerome Searing in his May 3, 2010, telephone call.

We hereby acknowledge that an inspection of the storm drain and street construction installed by the Bagshaw Company in the Rockingham subdivision has been completed.

PARAGRAPHS

Your letter of July 16 has been referred for review and appropriate action. We value you as a customer and ask your patience while a response is being prepared.

Thank you for the update on the preparation of the Price-Stables contract. I appreciate knowing what progress you're making.

Thank you for your workshop proposal, which we have just received. Ms. Bramber is out of the office for the next two weeks but will contact you soon after she returns.

Thanks for the samples. As soon as we've had a chance to get them under the microscope and run some tests, we'll let you know what we find.

I've received your kind invitation to join the Friends of the Library committee. I need to review other commitments to be sure that I can devote as much time to the Friends as I'd like. I'll let you know next

week. In the meantime, thanks for thinking of me.

The information you sent was exactly what I needed. It will take several weeks to reach a decision, but I'll call as soon as I do. In the meantime, thanks for your promptness.

Thanks for the call this morning, Janet. I'll see you on May 23 at 10:00 a.m. and will bring the spring lists with me.

I wanted you to know that I received your letter this morning, but as I'm leaving for Dallas later today I won't have time to look into the billing problem with the contractor for another week or so. If you need action sooner than that, give Agnes Laiter a call.

I'm glad we were able to reach an agreement on the telephone this morning. I'll have the contracts retyped—inserting the new delivery date of March 16, 2011, and the new metric ton rate of $55—and sent to you by the end of the week.

Thank you for telling me about the divorce. It's been too long since I've seen you. Can we get together sometime? How about breakfast Saturday morning? That used to work for us.

Thank you for your letter of June 9, describing the employee behavior you encountered on three different visits to our store. We are looking into the situation, and will let you know what we find. In the meantime, please accept our apologies for any embarrassment or unpleasantness you experienced.

Thank you for your letter of application and your résumé. We have received numerous responses to our advertisement, which means you may not hear from us immediately. Beginning March 1 we will call qualified applicants to arrange interviews.

We received your request for information on our stop-smoking plan and for a sample of the skin patch. Because of the enthusiastic response to our advertisement, we have temporarily exhausted our supplies of the skin patch. I'm enclosing the literature you requested, and will send the skin patch in approximately two weeks.

SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Borkin:

To confirm our telephone conversation, Barry Studio Supplies will be happy to provide you with all your photographic needs. We make deliveries in the metropolitan area within twenty-four hours of receiving an order.

Enclosed is a copy of our current catalog, a pad of order forms, and my card. As your personal representative, I can answer any of your questions and help you with special orders.

Sincerely yours,

Dear William Beevor,

We have received the blueprints for the Brass Bottle Hotel. As soon as Mr. Ventimore and the staff have had time to look at them, I'll call you to set up a meeting. Until then, Mr. Ventimore sends his regards.

Yours truly,

Dear Mrs. Beddows,

This is to acknowledge your kind expression of sympathy and the lovely floral arrangement you sent on the occasion of Mr. Holtby's death. Mrs. Holtby will be writing you a personal note as soon as she can. In the meantime, she appreciates your friendship and concern.

Sincerely,

Dear Mrs. Cammysole,

Thank you for sending the lease for the apartment on Thackeray Street.

We are having our lawyer look at it tomorrow afternoon, and we will be in touch with you as soon as possible after that.

With best wishes,

Dear Edna Bunthorne:

This will acknowledge your letter of August 6 addressed to Francis Moulton. Mr. Moulton is on a six-month medical leave of absence, and his interim replacement has not yet been named.

I am enclosing materials that will answer some of your questions, and I will refer the others to the new director as soon as possible.

If the delay is unacceptable to you, you may want to contact Kate Croy at the Lowder Foundation.

Sincerely,

Dear Professor Erlin:

Thank you for your paper, "The Rise and the Fall of the Clown Trope," which we received this week. Because of an overwhelming response to our call for symposium papers, our editorial staff will not be able to respond within the usual two to three weeks. It may be five to six weeks before you hear from us. Thanks for understanding.

Yours truly,

Dear Member,

Thank you for your order.

Unfortunately, we're temporarily out of stock on the item below. We've reordered it and expect to have a new supply in a few weeks. We'll ship it as soon as it arrives.

Sincerely,

Dear Dr. Breeve,

This is to confirm that you have permission to use the Great Organ of St. Luke's Church for an organ recital March 30 at 7:30 p.m. As agreed, you will be responsible for the expense of any organ repairs necessary for the recital.

Please call me to arrange for an extra key when you need to begin practicing.

We're delighted that someone of your talent will be using our wonderful old—but often forgotten—organ.

With best wishes,

Dear Geraldine Dabis:

We have received your loan application and will process it as quickly as possible. However, because of the complex nature of the application, it is being reviewed and evaluated by loan officers from two different divisions. This may delay our response somewhat.

If you have questions about the delay or about our process, please call me at 800-555-1216.

Yours truly,

See also: ACCEPTANCES, APPOINTMENTS, FOLLOW-UP, RESPONSES, SALES, THANK YOU, TRAVEL, WEDDINGS

THREE

LETTERS OF ADJUSTMENT

A reputation for handling customer claims quickly and fairly is a powerful public relations tool for any firm.

—L. SUE BAUGH, MARIDELL FRYAR, DAVID THOMAS

Write a letter of adjustment in response to a customer's letter of complaint (also called a claims letter). Business imperfections—incorrect bills, damaged merchandise, late payments—are not as rare as we'd like. In most instances, adjustments are handled routinely. "Keeping an old customer is just as important as gaining a new one." (N. H. and S. K. Mager)

An adjustment letter serves to (1) correct errors and make good on company inadequacies; (2) grant reasonable full or partial adjustments in order to maintain good customer relations; or (3) deny unwarranted

claims so tactfully that the customer's goodwill is retained.

In his classic *Handbook of Business Letters,* L. E. Frailey advises treating a complaint with as much respect as an order, letting customers know you are as eager to serve them as to sell them.

"Every unhappy customer will tell ten others about a bad experience, whereas happy customers may tell three." (Lillian Vernon)

The only thing worse than customers who complain are customers who don't complain—and take their business elsewhere. A claims letter gives you the opportunity to win the customer back. You know when you have written a good letter of adjustment because the customer returns.

(To request an adjustment, see COMPLAINTS; this chapter deals only with making them.)

Kinds of Adjustment Letters

• billing/invoice errors

• credit

• damages

• exchanges

• explanations: oversight/error

• newspaper corrections

• refunds/discounts

• refusing to make (see REFUSALS)

• repairing damages

• replacements

• time extensions

How to Say It

• Open with a cordial statement ("Thank you for your letter of June 3"), a thank you for bringing the matter to your attention, or a sentiment such as "We were sorry to hear that . . ."

• Refer to the error, specifying dates, amounts, invoice numbers.

• If the customer was correct, say so.

• State your regret about the confusion, mix-up, or error.

• Explain your company's policy of dealing with customer claims, if appropriate.

• Describe how you will resolve the problem or what you've already done. Sometimes you give customers the choice of a replacement, a refund, or a credit to their account.

• Mention when you expect the problem to be resolved, even if it is only "immediately," "at once," or "as soon as possible."

• Reassure the customer: this error is rare; you do not expect a repeat occurrence of it; the company works hard to satisfy customers.

• Close by acknowledging the customer's patience, asking for continued customer loyalty, offering further cooperation, reaffirming the company's good intentions and the value of its products, or expressing your expectation that the customer will continue to enjoy your services and products for years to come.

What Not to Say

• Don't use the words "claim" or "complaint" even though that's how these incoming letters are commonly identified. To customers, the terms sound accusatory and judgmental, and the majority of them honestly believe they are due an adjustment. Instead of "The damage that you claim was due to improper packing" or "Your complaint has been received," substitute a word like "report" for "claim" and "complaint."

• Don't say how surprised you are ("I can't believe this happened"; "Not once in twenty years have we encountered this problem") unless it truly is an exceptional occurrence. Customers assume that if the error happened to them, it could happen (and probably has) to anyone. You lose credibility.

• Don't repeat all the details of a problem or overemphasize it. A passing reference is sufficient. Focus on the solution rather than on the error. You want the latter to quickly become a vague memory for the customer.

• Avoid long explanations. Customers generally don't care about your difficulties with suppliers, employees, or shippers; they simply want an adjustment. Restrict your explanation, if you wish to include one, to several words ("due to a delayed shipment" or "because of power outages last week").

• Don't be excessively apologetic. A simple "We regret the error" is adequate for most slip-ups.

• Don't blame "computer error." By now people know that human beings run the computers, not vice versa, and this weak and obviously untrue excuse irritates people. And don't imply that these things are bound to happen from time to time. Although this may be true, it makes your company look careless.

• Don't make an adjustment grudgingly, angrily, impatiently, or condescendingly, and don't imply that you're doing the customer a big favor. This cancels the positive public relations effect of righting the error. Make your adjustment graciously or at least matter-of-factly even when the customer is angry or rude. Your attitude must be friendly and understanding; the high road leads to goodwill and customer satisfaction.

• Don't end your letter by mentioning the problem ("Again, we are so sorry that our Great Southwest Hiking Holiday was such an unpleasant experience for you") because it leaves the problem, not your goodwill and adjustment, uppermost in the reader's mind.

• Don't overstate company culpability or indicate in writing that the company was negligent. When negligence is involved, your lawyer can suggest the best approach for your letter.

Tips on Writing

• Respond promptly; this establishes your good intentions.

• Be specific: about the problem, about the steps you are taking, about what the customer can expect in the future. Vagueness leaves customers expecting more than is offered and unhappy when they don't get it.

• Assume responsibility when appropriate. Use the active voice ("We sent the wrong monitor") rather than the passive voice ("The wrong monitor was sent to you").

• When the customer has been inconvenienced, be generous with your sympathy. Sometimes out of fear that the customer will "take advantage" of such openness, businesses fail to give customers their due—and then pay for it in reduced customer satisfaction.

• In some cases, add a goodwill gesture: a discount coupon or gift certificate, or a reduction on the next order.

• Adjustment letters are easier to write when your company has a codified strategy for managing customer complaints. You can then follow and appeal to policy and handle similar situations evenhandedly; you will not have to reinvent the wheel for each claims letter.

• Old but still good advice: "Legalistic quibbles have no place in the answer to a complaint. The customer is rightly or wrongly dissatisfied; business is built only on satisfied customers. Therefore the question is not to prove who is right but to satisfy the customer. This doctrine has its limitations, but it is safer to err in the way of doing too much than in doing too little." (Mary Owens Crowther, *The Book of Letters,* 1923)

• An excellent resource for those who write letters of adjustment is Cheryl McLean, *Customer Service Letters Ready to Go!* MTC Business Books, 1996.

Special Situations

• Some problems are partly or wholly the customer's fault (failure to read installation instructions, excessive or inappropriate use). If you decide to grant the adjustment (most companies give customers the benefit of the doubt), don't assign blame to the customer; it undoes the goodwill you are establishing. When neither the company nor the customer is completely at fault, suggest a compromise adjustment or offer several solutions ("Because this item is not manufactured to be fire-resistant, we cannot offer you an exact exchange, but we would be glad to replace the fielder's glove at our wholesale cost, offer you a 30 percent discount on your next purchase, or repair the fire-damaged nylon mesh back"). "A compromise is the art of dividing a cake in such a way that everyone believes that he or she has got the biggest piece." (Ludwig Erhard)

• When you deny the requested adjustment (a complete refund, for example), explain why: an investigation of the matter did not support it (include documents or itemize findings); standard company policy does not allow it (and violating the policy in this case is not possible); the item is no longer under warranty; the item was used in a specifically prohibited manner. Be gracious but firm. Express your sympathy for the customer's point of view, explain that their letter was considered carefully, appeal to their sense of fair play, and close with a positive statement (expressing your appreciation of past business and cooperation, offering a coupon, saying that this was a difficult letter to write but the only response consistent with your values of fairness and responsibility).

• Before mailing a product recall notice, consult with your attorney since the wording is important. Most recalls are announced in a form letter that describes the recalled product, tells what the problem is, and explains how the consumer can receive an adjustment, replacement, or refund.

Format

• Adjustment letters dealing with nonroutine problems are typed on letterhead stationery. For routine adjustment matters, use a half-sheet size memo or form letter with blanks to insert the details.

• Small companies may return a copy of the customer's letter with a handwritten note: "We apologize for the error. Enclosed is a check for the difference."

• If you learn of the problem by e-mail or fax, respond that way.

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PHRASES

SENTENCES

I'm sorry about the error in filling your order—the correct posters are being shipped today.

Thank you for bringing to our attention the missing steel pole in the tether-ball set you ordered from us.

Thank you for giving us the opportunity to correct the erroneous information published in the last issue of Tallboys' Direct Mail Marketer.

Thank you for your telephone call about the defective laser labels—you will receive replacement labels within two to three business days.

We appreciate the difficulties you have had with your Deemster Steam Iron, but all our appliances carry large-print, bright-colored tags alerting consumers to the safety feature of the polarized plug (one blade is wider than the other and the plug fits into a polarized outlet only one way).

We are pleased to offer you an additional two weeks, interest-free, to complete payment on your formal-wear rental.

We hope to continue to serve your banking needs.

We regret the difficulties you had with your last toner cartridge.

We're sorry you had to write; this should have been taken care of some time ago.

We were sorry to learn that you are dissatisfied with the performance of your Salten personal paper shredder.

Your business and goodwill are important to us.

You're right, the self-repairing zippers on your Carradine Brent Luggage should not have seized up after only two months' use.

You will receive immediate credit for the faulty masonry work, and we will send someone to discuss replacing it.

PARAGRAPHS

Thank you for responding to our recall notices and returning the Small World farm set to us for a refund. Small World has been making quality toys for children since 1976, and we regret the design error that made this set potentially dangerous to young children.

Thank you for calling to our attention the pricing error on our Bluewater automatic pool cleaners. Enclosed is a check for the difference. We look forward to serving you again.

Thank you for your telephone call. You are correct in thinking that you should not have been charged interest this past month. We have credited $2.85 to your account.

After carefully reading your letter of August 4, I consulted our shipping department. It appears that we did comply with the terms of the contract (documents enclosed).

I am sorry that your order was filled incorrectly. Enclosed are the back issues that you ordered. Please keep the others with our apologies.

Thank you for taking the time to let us know of your recent experience with one of our products. We are always interested in hearing from our customers but regret that it was this type of occurrence that prompted your letter.

SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Willard:

Thank you for your letter of July 18. We are always happy to hear from our customers and pleased to be of service to them.

We are embarrassed to learn of your unfortunate experience with one of our products. We are always alert to constructive criticism, for we appreciate the enviable reputation our brand names enjoy in the marketplace with consumers the world over.

We would like you to know that as soon as we received your letter we held a special meeting with the resident managers of our Juvenile Puzzle Division, as well as our Quality Control Division. They are now looking into the problem.

In the meantime we are forwarding to you, with our compliments, several of our newest products, which we are certain will bring many hours of pleasant entertainment to your household.

We appreciate your taking the time to write us and hope that you will continue to look for our brand names whenever you purchase “things to do” that are fun for everyone.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Kenealy,

Enclosed is the Ralph Kello denim dress you ordered six months ago. I can only apologize most sincerely for all the difficulties you have had placing this order.

I am pleased that you are still interested in obtaining the dress. To help compensate you for your troubles I am also enclosing a check for $40—half the amount you sent us six months ago. Thank you for your patience, and I hope we can serve you again soon.

Sincerely,

Dear Malcolm Bryant,

We have received your signed copy of the major medical insurance waiver for this school year. The charge of $535 for student health insurance that was included in your fall tuition payment will be credited to your account.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Jordan,

This will confirm the arrangements made by telephone this morning. We apologize for your conference tables arriving with a center inlay color of Vanilla Illusion rather than the Blackstar Aggregate that you ordered.

The correct order will be delivered on June 7, and the other conference tables will be picked up at that time. As I understand it, only one table of the first shipment was un-boxed. If you can have that one reboxed or protected enough to be returned to us, we will appreciate it.

There will, of course, be no charge and in recognition of the inconvenience to you, we are enclosing a coupon good for $100 off your next order. We have always appreciated your business and look forward to serving you again.

Sincerely,

Dear Ms. Carfax,

We are sorry that the flowers you ordered for your holiday office celebration arrived in an unacceptable condition. Thank you for the dated photograph; it was helpful to us in assessing the problem.

It appears that somewhere between our premises and yours, the flowers were exposed to the below-zero temperatures we had that week. This would result in the wilted, browned appearance shown in the photograph. We are following up on this matter with our delivery people.

It is too late to save your holiday celebration, but we would like to make amends by, first, crediting your charge card for the entire amount of the flowers and, second, offering you complimentary flowers of equal value for your next occasion. We appreciate your business and hope to be of service to you again.

Sincerely,

Dear Lucy Snowe,

Thank you for your letter requesting a correction of several statements that appeared about you and your company in the most recent issue of *Small Business Today*. The information we were given was not double-checked; we apologize.

The correction appears on page 4 of this month's issue.

Sincerely,

Dear Eva Steer:

I am sorry that the Irish linens you purchased from us proved to be flawed.

Please return the order to us, complete with packaging. We will replace it at once and also refund your mailing costs.

I notice that you have been a loyal customer for the past eight years, so you know that our quality control people don't let something like this happen very often. I'm enclosing a discount good for 20 percent off your next order as our way of apologizing for your inconvenience.

Best regards,

Dear Gabriel Bagradian,

Thank you for your letter of July 7, appealing the $50 charge for the non-emergency use of the Werfel Community Hospital emergency room.

A review of the records shows that your son Stephan visited the emergency room on March 19 with a collapsed lung, not for treatment of acne. We regret the error that was made in coding the reason for the visit and have made an adjustment to your account.

We appreciate your spotting the error and letting us know about it so courteously.

Sincerely,
T. Haigasun
Billing Department

Dear Mrs. Painter,

Thank you for telling us about the infestation in our Wheatley cereal. We are sorry you had this experience and want you to know we share your concern.

Consumer satisfaction is most important to us, and we sincerely regret your recent experience with our product. Our company has strict standards of quality control. We carefully examine each lot of raw materials when it arrives. Sanitarians inspect our manufacturing plant continually and, in addition, make periodic checks of our suppliers' facilities. Food samples are collected all through the manufacturing process and are analyzed in our laboratories. We enforce these stringent procedures to ensure the production of high-quality, insect-free products.

The information you gave us about our product is being brought to the attention of the appropriate company officials.

Again, thank you for writing.

Yours truly,

Dear Mr. Steinmetz,

No, the motor on your vacuum should not have “worn out” six months after you purchased it. We can’t be sure what the problem is, but this is unusual for our top-of-the-line Costello vacuum.

Please take the vacuum to one of our repair shops (see attached list to find the one closest to you). The personnel there will examine the machine and if they can repair it, they will do so and bill us. If they find that the machine is defective, we will arrange to have a replacement shipped to you.

Please accept our apologies for the inconvenience this has caused you.

Dear Mr. Ramsdell:

Re: Claim 02018-1134 WB 753

Enclosed is a check in full settlement of your claim.

Because Shipper’s Transit Insurance was not purchased, the carrier’s liability is limited to $1.25 per pound times the weight of the load. This conforms with tariff regulations.

To obtain full reimbursement for damages or loss you must file a claim with your corporation traffic department or its insurance carrier. Please check with them about this.

Thank you for your patience and cooperation during the necessary delays in processing your claim.

Sincerely,

Dear Mr. Magnus,

We were unhappy to hear that you felt the installation of your fiber-optical cable was “sloppily done” and the electricians “unprofessional.”

We now have the report of two inspectors, one from our company and one from an independent oversight bureau, who visited your offices on November 11 and 12. Their evaluations indicate that the installation was meticulously done, that code standards were met or exceeded, that site cleanup was faultless, and that, in fact, there was no find-able cause for objection.

Interviews with your staff members who had contact with the electricians turned up no negative information about their behavior.

In the light of these reports, we are unable to offer you the requested deep discount on our services.

See also: ACKNOWLEDGMENTS, APOLOGIES, BELATED, COMPLAINTS, CREDIT, REFUSALS,

RESPONSES

FOUR

ADVICE

Advice . . . is a habit-forming drug. You give a dear friend a bit of advice today, and next week you find yourself advising two or three friends, and the week after, a dozen, and the week following, crowds!

—CAROLYN WELLS

Ask for advice only when you are open to it, not when you already know the "advice" you want to receive. That isn't fair to the person who spends time on a response. In addition, you may be unpleasantly surprised.

If you are the advice-giver, respond only to the issues raised by the other person; don't venture further afield.

If you have not been asked for advice, you are on shaky ground to volunteer it. "It is well enough when one is talking to a friend to hedge in an odd word by way of counsel now and then, but there is something mighty irksome, in its staring upon one in a letter where one ought only to see kind words and friendly remembrances." (Mary Lamb)

In general, give advice only when you have been sincerely asked for it.

Kinds of Letters Dealing with Advice

• asking for/requesting

• giving unsolicited

• offering suggestions

• rejecting

• responding to request for

• thanking for

How to Say It

• To ask for advice, briefly outline the issue. Tell what you expect from the other person and perhaps why you chose them in this situation. If you need the advice by a deadline, say so. Reassure them that they are not obliged to respond. Thank them for being available to you.

• To give advice, begin by rephrasing the other person's request ("You asked my advice about your college plans") or by explaining why you are writing (something came across your desk you thought might be of interest, or you had an idea that might be useful). State your opinion, advice, or suggestion. Explain your

reasoning, if necessary. Tell what, if any, action you think the person might take. Include a disclaimer: “this is only my opinion,” “I know you will use your own good judgment,” “just an idea . . .” Finally, assure your reader of your confidence that they will make a good decision, deal with the situation, succeed at any task.

• To thank someone for advice, express your gratitude as you would for any gift, but tell how the advice was useful to you. If you didn’t take the advice, thank the person for their time, effort, and concern. When you receive inappropriate or unwanted advice, assume—for politeness’ sake—that they meant well and acknowledge their attention.

What Not to Say

• Don’t over-explain. Outline your suggestion or course of action in a few sentences. “Whatever advice you give, be short.” (Horace) Brevity is difficult in a letter giving advice. We are tempted to offer all the wisdom accumulated over a lifetime. Resist. After writing your letter, delete half of it. The person who wants to know more will ask.

• Avoid “should” as in “I think you should . . .” No one can say what anyone else “should” or “ought to” do. Find a more flexible way of phrasing your suggestion.

• Don’t imply that you’ve found the one, correct answer. Offer instead alternatives, possibilities, fresh approaches.

Tips on Writing

• When giving advice, use tact, tact, and more tact. Read your letter as though it had been sent to you. How does it make you feel? Have someone read it to make sure it isn’t abrasive or patronizing. “Advice is like snow; the softer it falls, the longer it dwells upon, and the deeper it sinks into the mind.” (Samuel Taylor Coleridge)

• Start with a compliment or upbeat remark to frame your advice in a positive context.

• When possible, attribute the advice to someone else. Especially when your advice is unsolicited, consider getting another person to offer the advice you want to give. Advice that is unwelcome from a parent is often accepted from a third party. Advice from a superior may be better received from a colleague—or vice versa.

• Be specific. “Get a grip!” or “Shape up!” or “Try harder!” is not advice. Mignon McLaughlin wrote: “ ‘Pull yourself together’ is seldom said to anyone who can.” When possible, include names and telephone numbers of resources, costs of what you’re recommending, clear-cut steps to the goal.

• When giving unsolicited advice, be respectful and low-key, mildly suggesting that this is something the person might want to think about. In this instance, passive voice or indirect phrasing is useful (“If the loans could be consolidated” instead of “If you would consolidate your loans”). An intermediate step might be to write, “I noticed that . . .” or “Do you need any help?” and, without giving advice then and there, indicate that you are willing to do so.

Special Situations

• Letters giving professional advice (a lawyer advising a client, a doctor outlining a program of patient health care, a teacher suggesting tests for a child) is written much more carefully than most advice letters. The advice must be professionally defensible and might include references or sources for the advice. Keep copies of the letter (and sometimes send them to third parties). On occasion, another person's opinion may be needed to reinforce the advice and protect yourself. Ours is a litigious society; good Samaritans enjoy no protection under the law for their helpful works and intentions.

• If you request advice about investing money or about a situation with significant consequences, emphasize that the other person will not be held responsible for the outcome. With a written absolution, the recipient might feel easier about giving advice. You get what you pay for, however, and you might be better off seeing a professional (financial counselor, psychologist, lawyer, realtor).

• If your first letter of advice is ignored or poorly received, let it be your last letter of advice to that person. "The true secret of giving advice is, after you have honestly given it, to be perfectly indifferent whether it is taken or not, and never persist in trying to set people right." (Hannah Whitall Smith)

• Don't give advice warning against individuals, companies, or products; you could create legal problems for yourself. It's generally not a problem to recommend a person or an organization although, if you are a public figure, you might get asked pretty smartly to explain why you didn't mention certain others.

Format

• Use letterhead stationery to write a business associate outside the firm, memo paper or letterhead to write someone inside the firm, and informal stationery for social relationships.

• The choice of a handwritten or typewritten letter of advice can set the tone of your letter. A handwritten note to an employee might be perceived as too personal and a bit apologetic, where the typewritten message appears objective and matter-of-fact. On the other hand, writing a personal note in some sensitive business situations indicates that you are writing as a friend as well as a customer, client, or supervisor.

WORDS

PHRASES

SENTENCES

Although I liked what you wrote about switching your major from Physics to Astronomy, I have a suggestion you might want to consider.

Do you have any advice about how I can raise morale in the Accounting Department?

Ever since you asked my opinion about the Middlemarch line, I've been mulling over the situation, weighing the benefits against the rather considerable cost.

I don't usually give unsolicited advice, but this seems to me to be a special case.

I hope this is the sort of advice you wanted.

I'm considering a switch from the technical to the management ladder—do you have any wise, helpful words

for me?

I’m writing to you for advice.

I thought I should mention this.

I took your excellent advice and I’m grateful.

I will appreciate any comments or advice you’d care to give.

I would be grateful for your frank opinion about our registering Jermyn for kindergarten this year (he won’t be five yet) instead of waiting another year.

I wouldn’t ordinarily presume to tell you your business, but I’m concerned.

Thank you for your unerring advice about our hot rolling equipment—we’re back on schedule.

There is one thing you might want to consider.

We are unable to take your advice just now, but we’re grateful to you for thinking of us.

Would you be willing to tell me quite frankly and confidentially what you think about my interpersonal skills?

You asked for my opinion about switching service providers—here it is. You must, of course, use your own judgment, but I would suggest this.

Your counsel and advice have meant a great deal to me.

Your idea is excellent and I may regret not going that route, but I’m going to try something else first.

You were kind enough to ask my advice about the Hexam-Riderhood merger—this is what I think.

PARAGRAPHS

You asked what I thought of the new store hours. They are certainly more convenient for customers and will bring us the early evening business that can make a difference in our year-end numbers. However, I wonder if it is profitable to stay open so late on Saturday evenings. Could we keep a record of Saturday evening sales for a month?

We suggest that, instead of external motors and vacuum seals around the driveshafts, you install internal, pancake motors to handle the required tension ranges. Let us know if this takes care of the problem.

You might want to hire an investment banking firm to help with your financial restructuring. Such a firm can assist you in exploring strategic alternatives to rebuild your liquidity and improve value for shareholders.

Have you noticed that the newsletter is not carrying its own weight? I wonder if we ought to continue to subsidize it. I suggest we put it on a subscription basis. This will also oblige it to become more responsive to readers, one of the current complaints being that it isn’t. If it can’t survive on the income from subscriptions, I question its usefulness.

I would like to suggest that you examine the issue of cooperation versus competition in the school environment. In the three years our children have been students here, I've noticed the school is strongly oriented toward competition, with little value assigned to cooperative learning, cooperative sports, and cooperative activities. I'm enclosing several reports and studies on this issue. May I stop in and speak with you about this next week?

I'm flattered that you want my advice on choosing a college. However, you seem interested in the eastern colleges, and I know little about them. I wonder if you wouldn't want to talk to Ling Ch'ung, who in fact is quite knowledgeable about many of them.

Thanks so much for your advice on the hip roof and preparing for the building inspector. I doubt if she would have given me the building permit the way I was going about things!

I'm grateful to you for the time you took to outline a solution to our current problem. We are interested in your ideas. However, we just started working on another approach last Thursday and I'm going to wait and see how that develops. I'll let you know if we are later able to consider your plan. In the meantime, thanks for your helpful suggestions.

SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear Mr. Brimblecombe:

I was present at the Music Educators' Conference when your elementary school jazz band performed. I was impressed to hear that out of a school population of 640, you have 580 students in your instrumental music program. This is unusual, as I'm sure you know.

Do you have any advice for other elementary music directors trying to increase the number of student musicians? If you do not have the time to respond by letter, perhaps you could indicate on the enclosed postcard a time and date when I could call you long-distance. I'd appreciate any tips you might have.

Gratefully,

Dear Walter,

I hope you will forgive this unasked-for intrusion into your business affairs, but I felt I would be less than a friend if I didn't say something after visiting one of your gift shops last week (the one on Lewis Street).

I was surprised to see the china jumbled together on the shelves, the collector's dolls looking dusty and wrinkled, and some of the figurines chipped and dirty. This hasn't seemed to hurt business—customers were lined up at both counters when I was there—but over the long term it might be unfortunate. I just wondered if you were aware of the situation.

With best wishes,

Dear Tony,

As one of our most aggressive sales representatives, you have an enviable record and I expect you will be up for an award at the end of the year. The flip side of this aggressiveness is, unfortunately, a certain abrasive

attitude that has been reported by several customers.

I'd like to suggest two things. One, come in and talk this over with me. I can give you some idea of how people are responding to you and why it's a problem over the long term if not the short term. Two, spend a day or two with Tom Jerningham. He has a manner that is effective without being too insistent.

Let me hear from you.

Sincerely,

Dear Shreve,

We are both proud of how well you're doing in college—your grades, your job, your friends. I think we've told you often how much we love you and admire the way you handle things. BUT . . . (did you know there was a "but" coming?) we are extremely concerned about one new thing in your life: cigarettes. Will you please think about what it will mean if you let this habit take hold?

I'm enclosing some literature on the subject.

We won't nag you about this, but we had to speak up strongly at least once and say that, based on our experience, knowledge, and love for you, this is not a good choice.

Love,

Dear Marion and Leopold,

Thanks so much for driving all the way into the city just to look over the situation with the house. The decision whether to repaint or put on all new siding was really getting us down. Your advice was excellent, and we feel good about our decision. It was also wonderful to see you again!

Love,

Dear Hazel,

I appreciate your concern, and I am sure you have good reasons for feeling that we ought to move as soon as possible. However, after careful consideration of your proposal, I have decided that the situation is fairly stable at present and we should stay put.

Let me know if you have further information that would affect this decision.

Yours truly,

Dear Uncle Thorkell,

Thank you for your letter. I appreciated your advice about my earrings. I know it doesn't seem "manly" to you, but my friends and I like earrings. I'm coming home at the end of the month for a visit, and I don't want you to be disappointed when you see that I still have them. Although I am grateful for your concern, I am going to keep wearing earrings. I hope this won't hurt our good relationship.

Love,

See also: EMPLOYMENT, INSTRUCTIONS, REFUSALS, REQUESTS, SENSITIVE, THANK YOU

FIVE

ANNIVERSARIES AND BIRTHDAYS

I know a lot of people didn't expect our relationship to last—but we've just celebrated our two months' anniversary.

—BRITT EKLAND

With the availability of attractive greeting cards today, few people send personal anniversary or birthday notes and letters. However, anyone who has received a commercial card with only a signature knows how much pleasure could have been added with a handwritten line or two. For most people, finding a letter enclosed in the card is as good as receiving a gift.

Anniversaries once referred primarily to wedding anniversaries. Today, people celebrate business, service, personal, and other anniversaries and they appreciate being remembered on their special day.

Some businesses send birthday and anniversary cards to their customers as a goodwill gesture.

Send Letters or Cards for

• anniversary of a death

• birthday

• business goodwill (see GOODWILL)

• business or business association anniversary

• customers' birthdays or anniversaries (see SALES)

• invitations to birthday or anniversary celebrations (see INVITATIONS)

• personal achievement or service anniversary

• wedding anniversary (spouse, parents, family members, friends)

How to Say It

• Mention the occasion (if you don't know the number of years, refer to "your service anniversary," "your birthday," or "the anniversary of Beryl's death").

• Include, whenever possible, an anecdote, a shared memory, good-hearted humor, or a sentence telling why the person is important to you.

• End with good wishes for another anniversary period or for the coming years and with assurances of your affection, love, admiration, warmth, interest, delight, pleasure, continued business support, or other appropriate sentiment.

What Not to Say

• Don't detract from your greetings by including other information or news; remain focused on the anniversary or birthday. The exception is the newsy letter to a family member or close friend.

• Don't include "joking" references to advancing age, incapacity, passing years, the difficulties of married life, becoming a fixture at the office. Clever cracks about age and marriage and length of service may evoke reluctant smiles, but they carry little warmth. Avoid negative greeting cards that assume all 21-year-olds can hardly wait to get to a bar, that "the big 4-0" is depressing, and that 50-year-olds are over the hill.

Tips on Writing

• Birthday or anniversary greetings can be personalized with a quotation: "The great thing about getting older is that you don't lose all the other ages you've been." (Madeleine L'Engle) "The fact was I didn't want to look my age, but I didn't want to act the age I wanted to look either. I also wanted to grow old enough to understand that sentence." (Erma Bombeck) "The marriages we regard as the happiest are those in which each of the partners believes that he or she got the best of it." (Sydney J. Harris)

• Keep a supply of greeting cards on hand. At the beginning of the year, note dates to remember on the calendar or in a computer file (the gathering of dates is time-consuming only the first time you do it). On the first of each month, choose and address cards to all those celebrating that month. On the upper right-hand corner of the envelope (which will later be covered by a stamp) pencil in the date of the birthday or anniversary—and mail each one a few days before the date.

• Collect small, flat, useful gifts that can be inserted in a greeting card: handkerchiefs, bookmarks, postage stamps, lottery tickets, art postcards, dollar bills. You can also plump up a birthday or anniversary card with photographs, newspaper clippings, and recipes.

• A number of Internet sites allow you to choose and personalize greeting cards to be sent by e-mail.

Special Situations

• Keep track of service anniversaries in your company; sending a note to mark the date creates company loyalty, especially if you add a complimentary remark about the person's work. In the case of colleagues, personalize the note with a recalled shared experience. Goodwill is also built when you remember the anniversary of your relationship with important suppliers or customers.

• Birthday and anniversary goodwill cards are sometimes sent to individual customers. In businesses where you have access to customers' birthdates or anniversary dates (insurance, for example) sending cards is a way of keeping in touch with people while also reminding them of you and your products or services.

• In her book *The Bestseller*, Olivia Goldsmith points out, tongue-in-cheek, that it is considered bad form to

wish authors on their birthdays “many happy returns” since to a writer “returns” are unsold books returned to the publisher.

• Congratulations are appreciated on the anniversary of a significant personal achievement—abstaining from smoking or drinking, for example—but only between people who know each other well.

• Write close friends and relatives who have lost someone on the anniversary of the death. Don’t worry about “bringing up sad memories.” In one of her columns Ann Landers wrote, “I was among those who had the mistaken notion that it was painful for family members to hear references to a loved one who had died. Many readers called me on it, and I know better now.” The person is well aware of the date, and will be grateful that others remember. When someone close to you has lost a spouse after many years of marriage, you might want to send the survivor a special note on the couple’s wedding anniversary.

Format

• For business, sales-oriented, or official letters, send typed or handwritten messages on letterhead or personal-business stationery.

• Commercial greeting cards are appropriate for nonbusiness uses, as long as you add a handwritten note.

• E-mailed birthday and anniversary wishes are also received happily.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ashley Mansfield:

The book How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation can give more knowledge and information about everything you want. So just why must we leave a very important thing like a book How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation? Several of you have a different opinion about guide. But one aim this book can give many info for us. It is absolutely suitable. Right now, try to closer with your book. Knowledge or facts that you take for that, you may give for each other; you are able to share all of these. Book How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation has simple shape but you know: it has great and big function for you. You can appearance the enormous world by available and read a e-book. So it is very wonderful.

Suzanne Macdougall:

In this 21st one hundred year, people become competitive in every single way. By being competitive now, people have do something to make these survives, being in the middle of typically the crowded place and notice through surrounding. One thing that at times many people have underestimated this for a while is reading. Yeah, by reading a book your ability to survive enhance then having chance to stand than other is high. To suit your needs who want to start reading a book, we give you this How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation book as starter and daily reading publication. Why, because this book is usually more than just a book.

Jetta Butler:

Reading a guide can be one of a lot of exercise that everyone in the world really likes. Do you like reading book therefore. There are a lot of reasons why people enjoy it. First reading a publication will give you a lot of new data. When you read a e-book you will get new information simply because book is one of various ways to share the information as well as their idea. Second, looking at a book will make anyone more imaginative. When you reading through a book especially fictional book the author will bring you to definitely imagine the story how the character types do it anything. Third, you could share your knowledge to others. When you read this How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation, you can tells your family, friends in addition to soon about yours book. Your knowledge can inspire the mediocre, make them reading a publication.

Susan Swain:

Is it you actually who having spare time subsequently spend it whole day by watching television programs or just lying on the bed? Do you need something totally new? This How to Say It, Third Edition: Choice Words, Phrases, Sentences, and Paragraphs for Every Situation can be the response, oh how comes? A book you know. You are and so out of date, spending your time by reading in this completely new era is common not a geek activity. So what these books have than the others?

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